



Horse Council Courier

The Horsemen's Council of Illinois newsletter dedicated to promoting a healthy horse industry statewide through information and education.

Chicagoland Equestrian Lifestyle Expo Becoming known as "Best Educational Opportunity"

An expanded list of keynote speakers and presenters has been announced for the 3rd annual Chicagoland Equestrian Lifestyle Expo & Holiday Market November 20-21 at the Lake County Fairground's Expo Center, Grayslake, IL.

Keynoters include three-time Olympic coach Jane Savoie of Wellington, FL; Jeannine Berger, DVM, of Sacramento, CA, the only board-certified veterinary behaviorist specializing in horses in the United States; Richard Shrake of Sun River, OR, master educator, trainer and world-class horse show judge; and Randel Raub, PhD, head of equine research at Purina Mills' 1,100-acre 75-horse research farm.

Expo is produced by Horsemen's Council of Illinois and sponsored by Purina Mills.

The 65,000-square-foot Expo Center accommodates commercial booths, seminar areas and classrooms, but not horses, hence Expo's strong focus on education and "All Things Equestrian" shopping.



New this year is a unique in-the-saddle training experience from EQ Equisense Systems, developed in association with Savoie. The revolutionary equestrian training system was introduced this fall at the World Equestrian Games in Lexington, KY. Sensors in the device's saddle and reins wirelessly transmit data to a monitor where a certified instructor can check the rider's balance. Attendees will be able to mount a demonstration unit at Expo and experience diagnosing, evaluating and

improving their riding skills.

In practice, the EQ Enhanced Tack is used on a rider's actual horse and the instructor can analyze the nuanced positioning of a rider's balance and correct her use of aids in realtime.

Also new this year will be an educational track specifically for equestrian facility managers, offering sessions on the business aspects of running the facility as well as dealing with various types of customers. These sessions all will be on Sunday.

Expo also offers other unusual and useful hands-on learning sessions, such as how to analyze a fecal ball for parasites – bring your own fresh sample; microscope and instruction provided by the Southern Illinois University Equine Science Program.

Sevie Kenyon, communications specialist for the University of Wisconsin's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, called last year's Expo "the best equestrian education opportunity," he'd ever seen, commenting on the 50 presentations given over the two-day event.

Program details for all topics, presenters and times are available at the Expo website www.HorsemensCouncil.org. Check it often for updates.

"Whether you're looking for feed, tack, togs, a barn to house them – or just a good time learning more about horses and every aspect of the equestrian lifestyle – you'll find it at the Equestrian Lifestyle Expo," according to Joy Meierhans, Expo manager.

Vendors will offer English and Western tack, clothing for all breeds and disciplines; feed, supplements, health care products; facilities, equipment and stable supplies (barns, stalls, fencing, waterers), trailers and vehicles.

Holiday gift items will include jewelry, paintings, prints, sculpture, books, videos, stationery, home/barn/lounge accessories – even chocolates in the shape of horse

heads.

Savoie will help attendees understand techniques such as (1) "Take the 'Rigor' Out of the 'Mortis'" – learn three simple techniques to loosen and relax your horse's body and calm his mind; (2) "Whoa & Go" – learn to "whisper" with your aids and expect your horse to "shout" his answer...not the other way around; (3) "Your Attitude Determines Your Altitude" – change from negative to positive emotions in a heartbeat with two easy exercises; and (4) "The Secret to Reprogramming Yourself for Success" – two powerful tools that change the software in your "mental computer" so you automatically reach your goals.



Savoie knows whereof she speaks. She was the 2004 and 1996 dressage coach for the Canadian 3-Day Event Team in Atlanta and Athens. She also coached several top dressage and 3-Day Event riders for the 2000 Olympics, and while in Sydney she helped U.S. rider Susan Blinks win Bronze for the U.S. team.

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President's Corner

The Voice of the Illinois Horse Industry

There's a great lineup ready for you at HCI's 3rd Annual Chicagoland Equestrian Lifestyle Expo at the new Lake County Fairgrounds. Once again, world class presentations, new technologies to help you better understand your horse and the world around you, products available from vendors from around the country providing for an unbelievable shopping experience and educational programming for your whole family. It's the place to be Nov 21st & 22nd! Come and join us at Expo, look for that special holiday gift for the hard to buy for horseperson on your list or for the horse that has everything. Bring your friends who want to learn what horse ownership or horseback riding is all about. Stop by the HCI booth and say hi.

The horse industry remains a little pale due to the overall national economic picture, but there are several bright spots on the horizon. By working together we can put a new coat of paint on the old carriage house that is the horse community and build a new enthusiasm about horses and the equestrian lifestyle with those around us. Some proactive industry events aiming to do just that are the Coalition of State Horse Councils' Fall Meeting and Symposium on Nov. 5 -7 in Lansing Michigan and a planned industry-wide Horse Summit scheduled for Jan. 3 - 6, 2011 in Las Vegas. Both events will provide excellent networking opportunities and a chance to meet with other industry leaders from around the country to plan for a bright tomorrow.

Now that the mid-term elections are (finally) behind us, we'll want to get to know the newest members of our state's legislature and congressional delegation, hoping to educate them about issues important to our membership. Please take the opportunity to introduce yourselves too, and express your thoughts on horse ownership to them. Call the HCI office if you would like us to make arrangements with their district offices or would even like us to go along with you.

At HCI, we have been spending a lot of time, and resources, for the past several years stomping out the brush fires always being set by nuisance animal welfare bills and proposed regulatory changes, little things that could have a profound impact on your ability to keep and enjoy your horses. There is no doubt that all the time being spent on these discussions is doing some good. The tone of the debate about responsible horse care is changing a little. There is a new willingness on the behalf of our legislators to listen and learn about our issues. They

recognize, for the most part, that nobody cares more about horses than those of us who have both the financial and emotional investment in the horses. There has also been an awakening throughout animal agriculture about responsible animal care and an understanding that horses are indeed, not the only target of animal rights groups. Prop B in Missouri and ballot initiatives in Ohio, Michigan, Arizona, Florida and Colorado have pushed the discussions about animal care to a whole new level.

Federal Legislation (HR 503 and S 727) continues to threaten a nationwide prohibition on equine slaughter. We still see our surplus and unwanted horses being shipped longer distances, to potentially less regulated facilities in Mexico while the likes of Wayne Pacelle at the Humane Society of the United States and his minions make millions, live large and sock away huge retirement savings at the expense of the animals they pretend to care so much about. These prohibitory bills have always been more about fundraising, advancing legislative agendas and buying votes than about finding solutions for unwanted horses.

If you haven't stopped donating to the pretentious animal rights/welfare organizations already, please do so immediately! Don't fall for the sad-eyed kittens and puppies over the holiday season. It's a sales pitch not a solution! If you find yourself really wanting to make a difference for the horses, HCI has established a tax deductible way, through the Illinois Equine Foundation, for charitable giving. At HCI and the foundation it's all about the horses. We promise your contributions will go to help the horses in a way you see fit.

We'll be working on the issues every day while you're out riding, doing chores, feeding, cleaning stalls, fixing fence or working your day job in order to support the horse habit you love. We also appreciate your continued support and welcome your active involvement and participation. Contact the HCI office to find out ways you can help. Join us on Facebook for conversations about the issues, too.

Hope you got all your hay in the barn, that you're ready for winter and sure hope to see you at Expo! Bring the kids and a carload of your horse-curious friends! Bring some non-horsey family members, too; there will be plenty of educational opportunities and sure enough fun for everyone!

Happy Holidays!



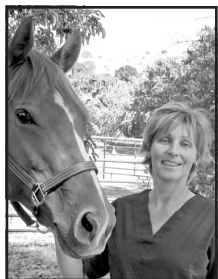
Frank Bowman

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A member of the U.S. Equestrian Team since 1991, Savoie has represented the United States in competition in Germany, Holland, France, Belgium and Canada. She was the reserve rider for the bronze medal-winning Olympic dressage team in Barcelona in 1992.

Savoie has written five books and collaborated on eight additional titles. Her books have been translated into French, German, Dutch, Spanish, Italian and Polish.

Dr. Berger practices behavior medicine

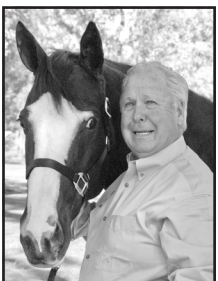


in her private practice, Sacramento Veterinary Behavior Service. Before she became staff veterinarian at the University of California, Davis, she worked at the University of Zurich

in Switzerland where she completed her thesis in large animal reproduction. She worked in Clinical Animal Behavior at UC Davis until earlier this year. She currently works with problem horses, starts young horses and teaches owners how to conduct behavior modification, which improves the horse-human relationship. A former trainer and competitor, Dr. Berger currently has three horses she rides for recreation.

At Expo she will help attendees understand (1) "My horse is telling me what?!" – how horses learn and tell us what they think, (2) "My horse has coping mechanisms?!" – what stresses a horse and how does he cope, (3) "Mind games for highly competitive horses," – mentally preparing them for competition, isolation, artificial environments, and (4) "Unspoiling the spoiled horse," Can it be done? Can you do it?

Shrake is the originator of the Resistance Free® Riding and Training methods.



He is an approved horse show judge for seven breeds and has judged more than 16 world and national championship shows.

Among subjects Shrake will present are (1) "Training Your Horse to Use Both Sides" – how to get the same ride in both directions; (2) "Selecting the Horse for You" – understanding your needs, questions to ask seller; and (3) "Twelve-Step Training Blueprint" – body position, leg and hand control.

Dr. Raub is Director of Equine Business Development and Technical Service for Purina Mills. He received his Bachelor and Master of Science degrees from the University of Illinois, and his Doctorate from the University of Kentucky where he focused on the effects of nutrition and exercise on growth physiology. Before joining Purina, he was the horse teaching and research specialist at Kansas State University for 12 years. He and his family are active in the breeding and training of ranch and western performance horses.

His presentations include (1) Beyond the Feed Tag – Horse feed ingredient, quality, formulation and safety issues; (2) Supplements...Benefit or Detriment to your Horse's Health? – Learn their potential benefit and how they can be detrimental to your horse's health as well as your bank account; (3) The Stupid Horse – Learn why horses, as well as many other animals, are just stupid. Or are they?

Part of Expo's programming format will be roundtables – literally – where attendees can spend 15 minutes at a table with an expert before moving on to the next table, topic and expert. Think of it as speed dating with the pros.

The Lake County Fairgrounds Expo Center is north of Chicago in Grayslake, IL – west of I-94 and south of Gurnee Mills and Six Flags Great America. It is at the intersection of Peterson and Midlothian Roads, located ½ mile west of US 45 and ½ mile east of IL 83. There is ample free parking in paved areas in front of the Expo Center.

One-day tickets are \$8; two-day \$14. They may be purchased on the web site with a credit card or at the door.

For information on Expo visit www.HorsemensCouncil.org and click on the Expo icon or call toll free 1-866-384-9161. For information on exhibiting, contact Joy Meierhans at (630) 557-2575 or JM@TheMeierhans.com.

For attendees who wish to extend their weekend, Chicagoland has lots to see and do. Expo has arranged excellent rates at host hotels in the area.

Horsemen's Council of Illinois, voice of the horse industry in Illinois, is affiliated with the American Horse Council and is the statewide association of equine organizations and individuals working to provide centralized leadership for Illinois' horses and horse owners, and its multi-billion-dollar industry. 🐾



Lea Ann Koch Named to HCI Board

Lea Ann Koch of Oswego has been named to Horsemen's Council of Illinois' Board of Directors to fill an existing, but vacant, two-year term, according to Frank Bowman, president.

"Lea Ann is a successful competitor, breeder and showman with a lifetime of involvement in the horse community, and we look forward to her ideas, input and active participation with the Council," Bowman said.

In addition to managing 1,400 acres of corn and beans in western and central Illinois, Koch owns and operates Koch Farm Quarter Horses with 19 mares of her own at the farm's breeding and foaling operation.

Lea Ann is the owner and breeder of last year's national high-point Quarter Horse halter mare, and high-point halter gelding. She is re-establishing the program at Koch Farm to "carry on Dad's dream of raising and showing the babies we raise, because he was my mentor," she said.

Lea Ann is the daughter of Dr. Howard Koch, a beloved and respected equine vet (River Heights Veterinary Clinic, Oswego), who passed away in 2009 at age 83. Dr. Koch was a national director of the American Quarter Horse Association.

Equally as dedicated to helping all breeds and the overall health of the entire equine industry, Koch said she is "particularly interested in working with Horsemen's Council to promote more interaction with horses."

Koch also is a 2010 appointee to the Kendall County Fair Board. She currently is president of the Land of Lincoln Quarter Horse Association, a director and past president of the Illinois Quarter Horse Association and a director of the Illinois Equine Industry Research and Promotion Board. 🐾

Benefits for Horse Industry in Small Business Stimulus Bill

The American Horse Council reports that President Obama signed the Small Business Jobs and Credit Act of 2010 into law on September 27, 2010. The bill is intended to help small businesses and create new jobs. The bill continues the bigger write-off for horses and other property purchased and placed in service by a horse business that were originally included in earlier stimulus bills.

The first incentive allows an owner who purchases a horse or other business property used in a horse business and places it in service in 2010 or 2011 to expense up to \$500,000 of the cost. This so-called "Section 179" expensing allowance applies to horses, farm equipment and most other depreciable property. Once total purchases of horses and other eligible property reach \$2 million, the expense allowance goes down one dollar for each dollar spent over \$2 million. Without the bill the expensing allowance would have been \$250,000 in 2010 and gone down to \$25,000 for later

years.


"Let's assume a horse business purchases \$750,000 of depreciable property in 2010, including \$650,000 for horses, and places it all in service. That business can write off \$500,000 on its 2010 tax return and depreciate the balance," explained American Horse Council President Jay Hickey.

This provision will benefit any business involved in the horse industry that purchases and places depreciable property in service in 2010 or 2011.

The second incentive reinstitutes the 50% first-year bonus depreciation for horses and most other depreciable property purchased and placed in service during 2010. Bonus depreciation had expired at the end of 2009. This benefit applies to any property that has a depreciable life of 20 years or less. Also, the property must be new, meaning that the original use of the horse or other property must commence with the taxpayer. For a horse

to be eligible, it cannot have been used for any purpose before it is purchased.

"The tax benefits in this bill are great for any horse business that has or is planning on making major purchases," said Hickey. "The expensing and bonus depreciation provisions can be used together in 2010. For example, let's assume an owner pays \$1,000,000 for a colt to be used for racing and \$100,000 for other depreciable property, bringing total purchases to \$1,100,000 in 2010. If the colt had never been raced or used for any other purpose before the purchase and is placed into service, the owner would be able to expense \$500,000, deduct another \$300,000 of bonus depreciation (50% of the \$600,000 remaining balance), and take regular depreciation on the \$300,000 balance."

"We hope the horse industry will take full advantage of these two tax benefits while they last," said Hickey. 

Horsin' Around: Humane Society seeking 'qualified' help

Guest column by Hope Holland, equestrian writer for the Carroll County Times, Westminster, MD

I have consulted Roget's Thesaurus for words that help define "campaign." Here is a sampling from the first group of words that correspond to this request: attack, fight, offensive and warfare. A sampling from the second is: agitate, lobby, muckrake and politick.

Please remember these definitions as you read the advertisement for a position with the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) that was e-mailed to a person who took a course in equine training from a leading protagonist of his own way of teaching people to train their own horses and was then forwarded to me.

No, I won't publicly identify this "trainer" except to say that he is certainly looking out for himself at the expense of other horsemen and horsewomen and it shows in his alliances.

The italics and underlining is all mine and is there to highlight the parts that I find most offensive in this missive.

"Equine Protection Specialist

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), the nation's largest animal advocacy organization, is seeking an Equine Protection Specialist for its Equine Protection section. The main responsibility of this position is to develop and implement campaigns to protect equines and provide for their humane care.

Other duties include, but are not limited to:

- develop campaign strategies and materials as directed by the Director of Equine Protection, and implement these campaigns in conjunction with media relations, publications, government affairs, other equine organizations and humane groups
- respond to equine-related calls and correspondence from humane societies, equine rescue groups, and the general public
- develop appropriate responses to various equine protection issues for use by regional offices
- develop relationships and coalitions with local rescue groups and animal shelters that work on equine issues and grassroots equine advocates to promote campaigns and implement strategies on equine protection
- research and assist in the drafting, publishing and marketing of horse care materials
- identify leading experts in various disciplines and work with the Director to develop relationships with and programs in consultation with these individuals for the purpose of expanding our influence and constituency
- represent the HSUS at venues

throughout the U.S. to promote our programs and vision for the protection and celebration of horses and to promote horses as "Companions For Life"

- assist the Director in the development and monitoring of budgets, outcomes and other indices of programs and accomplishments.

Bachelor's degree in animal sciences or related field and one to three years of experience as equine caregiver highly desired. Excellent verbal and written communication skills along with good knowledge of equine protection issues strongly preferred. The salary range for this position is from the low \$40's to the high \$40's."

I wonder whom these "campaigns" are directed against. Could it be you and I? You bet it could, and it is!

I also liked the phrase "to promote our programs and vision for the protection and celebration of horses and to promote horses as 'Companions for Life.'"

That Companions for Life is why you can't sell a horse anymore - oh, let's face facts - you can't even give 'em away. No one wants to be harboring an animal that costs upwards of \$300 to \$400 a month for the rest of its life. It is just not realistic.

Sadly the HSUS, in its always questionable wisdom, has never faced the

fact that there is no place for a horse to go when someone can't feed it anymore, so right now, thanks to the HSUS, there are more homeless and starving horses in the United States than ever before in our history. Sure, they are helping with this program and claiming to be the wunderkinds of that program but horses are still being turned loose in public parklands and along roadways.


And as for "one to three years of experience as equine caregiver highly

desired," well, that is patently ridiculous. No one I know would leave any horse they really liked with someone who only had one to three years of experience no matter how much "book larnin'" they had in college. It takes a lot more hands-on work with horses than one to three years to be trusted with an animal that is as frail and suicidal as most horses are.

And yet, good grief, this is what the HSUS is advertising for as its "Equine Protection Specialist!" And they are going

to put this person in charge of our futures.

It is past time to take back our futures, folks. It is time to disavow the self-interest of this group of people who have taken charge of us like the sheep we have been and not wait to be shorn once again.

How long are we going to sit around waiting while HSUS prepares "for the purpose of expanding our influence and constituency"? 

Unwanted Horses: Rescue and Sanctuary Organizations Unable to Keep Up

By Marie Rosenthal, MS The Horse.com, October 7, 2010

Each year there are about 100,000 unwanted horses in the United States, too many for the registered equine rescue and sanctuary groups to handle, according to a recent survey by researchers at the University of California, Davis. They found that the 236 registered rescue and sanctuary organizations could only help about 13,400 horses a year.

"Nonprofit equine rescue and sanctuary organizations have an important role to play in caring for and finding new homes for unwanted horses, but they are not a panacea (a cure-all) for the issue due to their limited capacity," said Kathryn Holcomb, MA, a PhD student at the University of California, Davis. Holcomb and her colleagues surveyed 144 organizations in 37 states to find out why so many horses are unwanted and who is taking care of them.

"I was impressed by the dedication of the people involved with equine rescue and the sacrifices they make in time, and the limited money and resources available to provide care for these horses," she said.

According to the researchers, these nonprofits do not have the land, staff, or financ-

es to handle all the unwanted horses. On average, they are supported through donations and personal funds, can care for only 10-20 horses at a time, and rely on volunteers to help. Between 2006 and 2009, only three out of every four horses relinquished to one of the nonprofit organizations surveyed was adopted or sold, and many organizations had to refuse horses due to lack of resources.

She supported the idea that breed registries and equestrians' associations help by dedicating a small amount--for example, \$1--of the registry fees or membership dues to help fund equine shelters. "The Thoroughbred racing industry has such a program with rehabilitating these horses to new roles," she said.

But the best way to solve the problem is to limit the number of unwanted horses, Holcomb concluded, and suggested these methods:


- Reduce indiscriminate breeding;
- Educate new and existing owners on the responsibility associated with horses throughout their lives;
- Take responsibility for matching horses

to rider ability and expectations;

- Use behavior science to reassess handling/training methods that might contribute to problems; and
- Use animal welfare science to ensure that the way we house, use, and care for our horses promotes their mental and physical well-being.

The survey found that the most frequently-cited reasons for relinquishing a horse are financial hardship, owner's physical inability or lack of time to care for the horses, and seizure by law enforcement agencies for alleged neglect or abuse.

"Owning a horse requires a considerable, long-term commitment and responsibility that should be fully understood and accepted at the time of purchase and throughout the horse's life," she said.

The study, "Unwanted horses: The role of non-profit equine rescue and sanctuary organizations," was published online ahead of print in August in *The Journal of Animal Science* and is available at no cost through the journal's website. 

To Lien or Not to Lien ***By Yvonne C. Ocrant, JD, HCI Director***

Horses fill our lives with joy, excitement, and never-ending financial woes. The board bills, breeding charges, training expenses, veterinary costs, and farrier fees, however, sustain businesses in the horse industry. These services, left unpaid, can lead to the ultimate demise of a boarding or training operation, veterinarian's practice, or any other equine related facility.

The law, therefore, provides businesses a means of collecting unpaid bills from horse owners and dictates required enforcement procedures. It is not only important for businesses to understand their rights and the collection requirements, but horse owners familiar with liens, when they attach, and the enforcement proceedings, may reduce the likelihood of losing their horse to a collection sale. Lien laws in

each state may differ. Therefore, consult a lawyer knowledgeable of the equine related lien laws and procedures in your state before attempting to enforce your rights as a creditor or protect your rights as a debtor. Improper lien enforcement proceedings can result in civil penalties and possible criminal charges for conversion, a legal term for taking another person's property without the right to do so.

This article does not offer legal advice or specify all the legal rights and remedies of equine related liens. With the interests of both service providers and horse owners in mind, this article introduces statutory liens for equine related services in Illinois and answers frequently asked questions about lien attachment, enforcement, and the rights of horse and stable owners in the

process.

What is a lien?

A lien is a right in property to secure the payment of a debt. In theory, equine related liens give service providers the right to sell a client's horse and apply the proceeds of the sale to satisfy the delinquent bill. As mention above, failure to ascertain your rights and follow the specific procedures may cause more financial costs than the rights you had in the first place.

What types of liens are available?

Each state offers its own specified rights, and the means by which those rights are enforced. Illinois provides four equine service related liens: Farrier Liens, Breeder Liens, Stable Keeper Liens, and Agister's Liens.

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- Farrier and breeder liens are for unpaid shoeing or breeding costs.
- A stable keeper's lien is for delinquent management, protection, control, or other horse care bills. The stable keeper may or may not be the owner of the facility where the horse is boarded. This lien may apply to a training or boarding facility, a veterinarian hospital, or any other business taking care of another's horse. The statute can be found at 770 ILCS 40/Innkeepers Lien Act or on line at www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs.

- An agister's lien applies to anyone who receives and pastures horses for a fee. Therefore, if a facility merely provides land for pasture boarding, the owner is entitled to the charges due for keeping, pasturing, and feeding the horses.

What is the difference between a stable keeper's lien and an agister's lien?

As a practical matter, agister's liens typically apply to cattle and other livestock, while the stable keeper's lien is more appropriately applied to domestic horses. The stable keeper's lien is broader than the agister's lien in that it may cover expenses for medical services, training fees, or other costs associated with the horse beyond mere feeding and pasturing.

How must a stable keeper or agister care for the horse until his lien is enforced?


In the absence of other contractual terms, the agister or stable keeper must exercise reasonable care of the animals in keeping, feeding, sheltering, and otherwise caring for the horses committed to his custody. He is not liable as an insurer of the animals, however, he is responsible for loss or injury to animals resulting from his negligence in furnishing inadequate or improper food or water.

When is a lien attached to the horse?

Specific statutes dictate when a lien

attaches to a horse. The Horseshoers Lien Act requires the farrier to file a specifically written claim in the county recorder's office within six months after showing the horse to secure the benefits of a lien. The Stallion and Jack Service Lien Act requires a stallion owner to file his written claim within 24 months after a mare has been served by his stallion. Stable Keeper's and Agister's Lien's are possessory liens, meaning, there is a right to collect payment while the horse is in the possession of the service provider. A lien is defeated if the horse is returned to the client while the bill remains due.

How is a lien enforced?

The statutes also dictate how to enforce lien rights. The Horseshoers Lien Act and the Stallion and Jack Service Lien Act entitle a lien holder to file a complaint in court to foreclose their lien against the person who is responsible for the service payment. The foreclosure proceedings may then proceed to a public sale of the horse. Any sale under the Horseshoers Lien Act or the Stallion and Jack Service Lien Act are subject to redemption by the owner for 30 days after the day of sale. The stable keeper's and agister's liens do not provide for foreclosure proceedings. Rather, a public sale of the horse is permitted after giving adequate notice of the sale to the owner. Sale of the horse to satisfy a stable keeper or agister lien, in conformity with the statutory requirements, bars any action against the lienholder for the recovery of the horse or its value. 

This article is intended for informational and educational purposes only. It is provided with the understanding that the author is not rendering legal advice. If you have questions or concerns regarding this article's subject matter, you may contact the author, a licensed attorney practicing equine law in Illinois, at yocrant@hinshawlaw.com.

Understanding and avoiding laminitis and founder in horses

By Kevin H. Kline, PhD. Professor of Animal Sciences, University of Illinois and HCI Director

Horses and other equids have a unique anatomy whereby their entire body weight is supported by the equivalent a single fingernail on each foot. The horse's hooves are bound to the last digit of each front and hind limb by a set of feathery-looking structures called sensitive laminae which lock into grooves on the inside of the hoof walls. These grooves are called the insensitive laminae. Whenever a horse's sensitive laminae, which are absolutely essential for normal weight bearing and locomotion, become inflamed and sore, then the horse is said to have laminitis. When the sensitive laminae are damaged to the point that they begin to detach from

the insensitive laminae and last bone of the foot, called the coffin bone or third phalanx rotates downward, the horse is said to be foundered. Horses with acute painful laminitis may recover a reasonable degree of soundness if the coffin bone rotation is minimal, however, once a horse is significantly foundered, it is unlikely that it will ever recover full soundness. Therefore, it is important for horse owners to manage their horses to reduce the likelihood that laminitis will ever occur.

At a recent Equine Science Symposium in Australia, some of the world's leading experts on equine laminitis presented

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Join Us Today!

Individual Membership Application

Name _____

Street _____

City _____

County _____

State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone () _____

Work Phone () _____

Fax () _____

Email _____

How many horses do you own? _____

_____ at home _____ boarding stable

Individual Membership Dues (includes \$1,000,000 insurance coverage) **\$42/yr**

Organization Membership Application

Organization _____

Contact Name _____

Street _____

City _____

County _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone () _____

Fax () _____

Email _____

Website _____

of Illinois Members in Organization _____

Check appropriate category
____ Business/Professional ____ Association ____ Charity

Organization Membership Dues: \$50/yr.

Make check payable and mail to:



Horsemen's Council of Illinois
3085 Stevenson Dr., Suite 308
Springfield, IL 62703
Phone: 217.585.1600
www.horsemenscouncil.org

Total amount enclosed: \$ _____

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research and recommendations for prevention, which are summarized here.

“Thrifty” horses

Dr. Patricia A. Harris of the Equine Studies Group of the Waltham Centre for Pet Nutrition in the UK has been investigating features of horses that are “thrifty” or prone to being fat, and also prone to developing laminitis. She has been trying to determine why horses and ponies that tend to maintain body weight easily and become obese when consuming seemingly small excesses of feed are also prone to laminitis and founder.

One aspect of these “thrifty” horses currently under investigation is the function of the glucose transporter proteins that are important for carrying glucose to both muscles and fat. These glucose transporter proteins are acted upon by insulin to control the amount of glucose that will be carried in the blood versus delivered to the tissues. The main transporter protein that carries glucose to muscle and adipose tissue is called glut-4. This glut-4 glucose transporter protein appears to be inhibited by a gene in certain ponies that are prone to laminitis.

It is quite possible that this “thrifty gene” may have been beneficial for ponies in the wild, under harsh conditions of feed restriction. Blocking glut-4 would then leave more available glucose for use in other tissues like the endometrium (lining of the uterus) that don’t require glut-4 to transport glucose in order to support pregnancy when times were tough. However, under modern conditions of feed abundance, these animals are more prone to high levels of visceral fat and fatty acids in the blood which the liver converts to glucose.

Insulin insensitivity

It has been found that horses that are insulin insensitive are much more prone to laminitis than normal horses. Most people realize that insulin is secreted by the pancreas in response to rising blood glucose concentrations after a meal. As

mentioned earlier, insulin activates glut-4 to return blood glucose concentrations to normal by transporting glucose into tissues. Horses that require much more insulin than the average horse to return blood glucose concentrations to normal are said to be “insulin insensitive”. What many people didn’t realize was that the blood glucose curves recorded after meals in insulin insensitive horses are identical to those in horses that are normal. However, the “normal” blood glucose curve after a meal in an insulin insensitive horse is achieved by secreting greatly elevated concentrations of insulin to overcome the inhibited glut-4.


Laminitis-inducing feeds

Even in horses and ponies that are metabolically normal, prior research has suggested that over-used glut-4 may become resistant to the action of insulin simply from chronic overfeeding of starchy and sugary feeds. It has also been known for many years that laminitis can be reliably produced by intentionally overfeeding horses, even just once; using excessive amounts of cereal grains. It is always wise to limit grain feeding to horses that are either overweight or those that have ever experienced an episode of laminitis after grain feeding.

Even though overfeeding of grain is probably the single best-known cause of laminitis among horse owners, it is very likely that most laminitis and founder cases occur in horses and ponies out on pasture. Once again, the “thrifty” or “easy-keeper” and “insulin insensitive” equines are the ones most prone to “grass founder”. Most of the research on grass founder in horses in recent years has focused on a class of plant sugars called “fructans” in pasture grasses. A study reported by Dr. S.R. Bailey of the University of Melbourne, Parkville, Victoria, Australia, found that dietary fructans produced exaggerated insulin responses in ponies genetically prone to laminitis. Insulin concentrations after feeding high concentrations of fructans to genetically laminitis-prone

ponies averaged 5.5 times higher than in normal ponies. This is more powerful evidence that both genetics and nutrition are key elements in the development of this devastating disorder, and that certain forages alone may pose a danger to many horses and ponies that are genetically prone to laminitis.

Several suggestions were offered at the Australian Equine Science Symposium to combat grass founder in horses and ponies that are predisposed to the condition:

1. Use varieties of pasture grasses that tend to be lower in fructan concentrations.
2. Fructan concentrations tend to be lower in pasture grass at night, so allow horses to graze at night and limit daytime grazing.
3. The top of grass shoots tend to be lower in fructans than the bottom, so the use of grazing muzzles that partially restrict grazing to the upper portion of shoots may be helpful.
4. Don’t allow horses to graze frosted pastures. Frosted pastures have higher levels of fructans because the plants can still photosynthesize, but growth is diminished, so high levels of the sugars build up that don’t get used for growth.
5. Fructan concentrations can likewise increase after drought, although the reduced total yield of forage tends to diminish the danger. However, don’t allow a founder-prone horse to be turned out on a droughty pasture that has not been grazed extensively, as this can also result in consumption of dangerous concentrations of the plant sugars.
6. Soaking hay for 30 minutes in cold water before feeding can reduce the fructan concentration by up to 50%, and can be very helpful for horses and ponies that are prone to laminitis. 

What do you think? Can you legally and safely bury a dead horse?

Horsemen’s Council of Illinois would like to hear your thoughts on this prevailing issue. You may direct your comments to HCI@horsementscouncil.org.

Question: According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, the Illinois Department of Agriculture and many animal protection organizations, the preferred method of euthanizing horses is now by lethal injection of barbiturates administered by a licensed veterinarian.

Can you bury a chemically euthanized horse in your backyard in Illinois?

Answer: Yes, as long as you meet certain minimum requirements for distances from wells and neighbors. These requirements often vary from one local jurisdiction to another. You could also transport the dead animal to a landfill that is willing to accept animals...if you can find one. At present there is no distinction in the Illinois Dead Animal Disposal Act between chemically

euthanized horses and those that may die from disease or natural causes.

There is a concern that burying carcasses of horses euthanatized by barbituric acid derivatives or other chemical agents may contain potentially harmful residues that do not break down in the environment and that may eventually leach into groundwater or nearby streams or rivers. These carcasses must be disposed of in a manner that will

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prevent them from being consumed by dogs or other animals.

If not euthanasia, then what?

According to Joe Lowry, DVM and HCI Director, euthanasia may be the kindest end for a number of these unwanted horses, but inevitably there will be a number of owners who will be unwilling to face the reality of euthanizing their horse, or will be unwilling to shoulder the costs and responsibilities associated with euthanasia. Those costs are not insignificant. The veterinary fees usually will range from \$50-\$250, but this is just the beginning.

If local regulations allow, the horse's body can be buried according to Department of Agriculture guidelines. This will entail charges for backhoe services of \$100-\$300. Some states and municipalities do not allow burial. One of the national trends in the horse industry is that horsekeeping is becoming more urbanized; since burial

of something as large as a horse is not allowed in most densely populated urban areas, burial is not the answer for a growing number of horse owners. Also, barbiturate residues from the euthanizing agent pose a hazard to animals, ground water and the environment. According to the AVMA report of the Panel on Euthanasia, "these drugs tend to persist in the carcass and may cause sedation or even death of animals that consume the body."

The other legal option for disposal is to have the body hauled off by a renderer (more than \$250 in our area), or if the rendering plant does not provide for carcass pickup, transportation must be arranged. This is provided that there *is* a rendering facility within a reasonable distance. According to the National Renderers Association, there are approximately 285 rendering plants in the entire US. Once again, if only a fraction of the 100,000 US horses currently being

sent to slaughter in Canada and Mexico are added to the euthanasia-and-rendering rolls, there simply may not be enough rendering plants to accommodate them.

**See you
at
the
Expo!**



Importance of proper burial

Reprinted as "Secondary pentobarbital poisoning of two dogs: a cautionary tale" from the Journal of Veterinary Diagnostic Investigation, July 2010.

A sad story from Wyoming underscores the importance of properly disposing of equine carcasses.

According to a recently published report, two dogs died of secondary pentobarbital poisoning after scavenging the body of a horse euthanized two years previously. How the corpse had originally been buried is unclear, says Merl Raisbeck, DVM, PhD, who was involved in the case. "But it was pretty thoroughly exposed by the time of the case in question." Even though the horse's body had significantly decomposed "there were some desiccated bits left," he said.

Most states have laws or guidelines for the disposal of dead animals. According to Wyoming Legislative Service Office, the state's law specifies that carcasses be buried at least two feet

below ground level. "I usually recommend five to six feet – that's what the landfills I'm familiar with use, and it's what you usually see mentioned in recommendations from other authorities," says Raisbeck.

"Unfortunately, that can be pretty difficult in a lot of places, especially in winter, and people just drag them off to the bone pile like they do animals that dies from other causes."

A barbiturate used as a sedative and antiseizure medication in people, pentobarbital suppresses neurological function. In veterinary medicine pentobarbital is primarily used in large doses as a euthanasia solution. Poisoned dogs "lie down and go to sleep," says Raisbeck. "They may recover if the dose was small enough or they may die."

Pets aren't the only ones at risk. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has documented at least 139 cases of secondary pentobarbital poisoning in bald eagles; in one case 29 eagles died after scavenging a single cow carcass. 